

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5520

As of February 5, 2007

Title: An act relating to the use of video equipment in nursing homes.

Brief Description: Authorizing the use of video equipment in nursing homes.

Sponsors: Senators Honeyford and Keiser.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Health & Long-Term Care: 2/05/07.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH & LONG-TERM CARE

Staff: Rhoda Donkin (786-7465)

Background: Placing video cameras in nursing homes to monitor residents is the subject of debate in many states. While stores, banks, sport arenas, and parks have routinely installed electronic surveillance devices, there is increasing interest in them in places like day care centers and nursing homes as a means of deterring abuse and monitoring safety.

Concerns about this practice center around individual rights to privacy. In a nursing facility, a residents room is their home. There are ethical concerns about placing video cameras in rooms where individuals are mentally impaired. When privacy rights are waived, advocates of electronic surveillance in nursing homes say safety concerns outweigh other considerations.

Summary of Bill: An administer of a nursing facility may use video equipment to monitor and observe all areas of the nursing facility frequented by residents, staff, and visitors.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: This would help protect residents of nursing homes from abuse.

CON: This violates individual rights to privacy. Nursing home residents consider the whole facility their home, not just their rooms. There is no resident outcry calling for video surveillance.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

OTHER: If residents request video surveillance and if their roommate approves, there could be some value if theft or abuse is suspected. But privacy concerns must be addressed. This should be studied carefully before proceeding.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Honeyford, prime sponsor.

CON: Joyce Stockwell, Department of Social and Health Services; Louise Ryan, Long Term Care Ombudsman.

OTHER: Julie Peterson, Washington Association of Housing and Services for the Aging.